

Microsoft picks Miami for first US innovation center

May 2 2014, by Laura Wides-Munoz

Microsoft is opening a state-of-the-art training facility in Miami, its first within the United States, the company announced Friday.

The tech giant already has some 100 innovation centers in 80 countries worldwide in countries like Uganda and Greece. These centers aim to help governments, academic institutions, community leaders and startups better use technology to innovate and develop more collaborative learning—with the goal of spurring economic development. Along the way, of course, the company is cultivating a new generation of Microsoft loyalists.

Microsoft Vice President Sanket Akerkar told The Associated Press the company looked at Miami as a great hub for tech in the Southern United States.

"Miami is a great destination in and of itself," he said. "We've got forward thinking government leaders," he said. The Latin American connection also sets the city apart.

Microsoft is working with city and county officials to open the center next month. It will be housed at the new downtown, entrepreneurial institute Venture Hive. The Hive, which opened its doors last year thanks in part to city and country grants, already serves as an incubator and accelerator for some 35 companies from around the globe.

Venture Hive Founder Susan Amat says public, private and academic

partnerships are key to developing the region's entrepreneurial and technology scene.

Bringing Microsoft in is part of the broader goal of "bringing the world to Miami," she said.

Akerkar said he hopes to start offering training for teachers and professors this summer on the "app economy" so they can help their students learn hands-on how to design their own apps.

The announcement comes as investors, startups and global companies descend on Miami for the new eMerge Americas Techweek conference, part of a broad effort to promote technology and innovation in South Florida.

Akerkar acknowledged Miami's tech scene is still in the startup stage itself.

"What we're thinking about is maybe more of the potential and the place it can go," he said, adding the company eschewed other cities for its first U.S. site because those regions already have robust technology support systems in place.

"In places where there's already a tech hub, there's already support systems," he said. "We want to add to the investments being made in Miami."

The [company](#) is eyeing Houston for its second site.

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Citation: Microsoft picks Miami for first US innovation center (2014, May 2) retrieved 7 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-05-microsoft-miami-center.html>

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